

Response to Jeffrey Khoo

By James D. Price

On March 18, 2007, Jeffrey Khoo published a review of my book, *King James Onlyism: A New Sect*.¹ In this review, Khoo also discussed my former critique of his paper, “A Plea for a Perfect Bible.” Regarding that critique he stated that I “grossly misrepresented my position on VPP [verbal plenary preservation] of Scriptures by making it a purely translational (English and KJV) issue when it was primarily a textual and doctrinal one (100% inspired and 100% preserved Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words underlying the faithful and accurate KJV on the basis of the twin doctrines of the VPI [verbal plenary inspiration] and VPP of the Holy Scriptures.” He further stated that “Price does not seem to care about accurate and truthful reporting for . . . [h]e insinuates that . . . Edward F. Hills, . . . David Otis Fuller . . . and . . . D. A. Waite . . . believe in the inspiration of the English words of the KJV when they are actually talking about the inspiration and preservation of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words on which the KJV is based.”

Unfortunately, it is Khoo who misrepresents the facts, for I acknowledged their claim for the inspiration and preservation of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words, devoting an entire chapter (12) to the topic. Concerning Hills, I insinuated nothing; I openly declared: “Consequently, it may be concluded that Hills’ defense of the *Textus Receptus* is really a scholarly disguise for a King James Only agenda” (p. 274). There were good reasons for saying so, as the following demonstrates. I wonder how carefully Khoo read my book.

My criticism of Hills, Fuller, Waite, and particularly Khoo and his colleagues at the Far Eastern Bible College is based on objective evidence not on theoretical claims. Here is a summary of Khoo’s claims about the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible as contained in the Far Eastern Bible College constitution:²

- (1) The Holy Scriptures are “100% inspired and 100% preserved.”
- (2) “We believe the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament underlying the Authorised (King James) Version to be the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant.”
- (3) “Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is direct utterance of the Most High.”
- (4) The FEBC . . . found it necessary to state clearly the nature and identity of the Holy Scriptures that we have in our hand today. . . . FEBC stands with . . . [the] affirmation of the present infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, and the identification of the divinely preserved texts to be the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus.

¹ Bulletin of the True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Vol. IV No. 25, 18 March, 2007.

² Bulletin of the True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Vol. IV No. 24, 11 March, 2007; see also their website: <http://www.febs.edu.sp>.

These claims are further explained by Khoo's colleague, Lawrence E. Bray, who stated, "What this doctrine states is that while the Bible was immediately inspired in the originals, it was kept pure throughout the ages. The purity of preservation is no less than the purity of inspiration as it is the work of God Himself."³ Bray then defines this purity as "to be complete, without fault, free of foreign elements . . . the Scriptures in their original languages *were pure and perfect in the apographs (copies)*, not solely in the autographs."⁴ Bray concluded: "**Without preservation there is no purity. Without purity the text can be questioned. When the text can be questioned we have no final authority.**"⁵

Here is my summary of their claims for the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible:

- (1) They claim that the Hebrew and Greek words of the divinely inspired autographs are divinely preserved in the *apographs* (copies, manuscripts) in their original purity.
- (2) They claim that the preservation of the pure text continued throughout history.
- (3) They claim that these divinely preserved pure words underlie the English words of the King James Bible.
- (4) They claim that these divinely preserved pure words constitute the Hebrew Masoretic Text of the Old Testament and the *Textus Receptus* of the New.
- (5) They claim to have these divinely preserved pure Hebrew and Greek texts in hand.

Here are the problems with this position:

- (1) All existing (preserved) apographs (copies, manuscripts) differ from one another so that none may be regarded as a pure copy of the autographs in the sense of purity Khoo and his colleagues define it. What is true of the manuscripts is also true of all printed editions. So the evidence denies pure preservation of apographs.
- (2) This lack of perfect copying persisted throughout history. So the evidence denies pure preservation of apographs throughout all ages.
- (3) None of these preserved apographs perfectly contains all and only all the Hebrew or Greek words that underlie the English words of the King James Bible. What is true of the manuscripts is also true of all printed editions. So the evidence denies the existence of a KJV validating text in tangible form.
- (4) The Traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text of the Old Testament does not perfectly underlie the English words of the King James Old Testament; and the

³ "Modern Denial of Preservation," Bulletin of the True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Vol. IV No. 23, 4 March, 2007.

⁴ "Modern Denial of Preservation," Bulletin of the True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Vol. IV No. 23, 4 March, 2007; emphasis his.

⁵ "Modern Denial of Preservation," Bulletin of the True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, Vol. IV No. 23, 4 March, 2007; bold faced emphasis his.

Traditional Greek *Textus Receptus* of the New Testament does not perfectly underlie the English words of the King James New Testament.

These facts destroy their claim to have a pure Hebrew and Greek final authority. Regarding the Hebrew Masoretic Text, there is no manuscript or printed edition that is regarded as a pure copy of that text. Some regard Bomberg's second edition of the Rabbinic Bible to be the Hebrew *Textus Receptus*. But I have catalogued more than 220 places where that text does not underlie the English words of the KJV.⁶ So, according to Khoo's claim, this text does not qualify as a pure final authority. On the other hand, some regard the Hebrew Bible published by Christian David Ginsburg (1894) and reprinted by the Trinitarian Bible Society (1998) to be the Hebrew *Textus Receptus*. But this text agrees with Bomberg's second edition in nearly every place where the Bomberg text does not underlie the KJV. In fact, Ginsburg's text is full of footnotes recording variant readings for the benefit of textual criticism, something Khoo discounts as unnecessary. So the two best candidates for being the pure final authority fail the test for perfectly pure conformity with the KJV English.

The same is true for the New Testament. It is true, however, that an effort was made to provide a Greek *Textus Receptus* for the New Testament that underlies the KJV. This was first undertaken by Oxford Press in 1825, and subsequently revised and edited by F. H. A. Scrivener in 1894. This was done by back-translating from the KJV, selecting from the various available printed editions those Greek words that underlie the English of the KJV. However, even this text lacks perfect purity, because in a few places this text fails to support the KJV. For example, in Acts 19:20 the KJV reads "the word of God," whereas Scrivener's *Textus Receptus* reads "the word of the Lord." Likewise, in Hebrews 10:23 the KJV reads "faith" whereas Scrivener's TR reads "hope." Such departures as these from a perfectly pure representation of the Greek text underlying the KJV English disqualifies Scrivener's TR as Khoo's pure final authority. Khoo's rationalization cannot remove these and other blemishes; they are genuine textual differences.

- (5) Jeffrey Khoo and his colleagues do not have in hand a Hebrew Old Testament that perfectly underlies the King James Old Testament; and they do not have in hand a Greek New Testament that perfectly underlies the King James New Testament. Let him ask himself the question he asked me: "Where are God's infallible and inerrant words today?" Khoo can disprove this charge only by producing a pure Hebrew text that perfectly underlies the English words of the KJV Old Testament and a pure Greek text that perfectly underlies the English words of the KJV New Testament, texts that he can hold in his hand and say: "This is the divinely inspired, perfectly preserved Word of God, my final and only authority." He claims that I do not have such a Bible; let him produce what he claims to have in hand. An unsubstantiated claim will not do; his texts must successfully survive rigorous scrutiny. But in order to produce such texts, Khoo and his colleagues must back-translate the English words of the KJV to decide which of the various Hebrew or Greek words the

⁶ See chapter 13 and Appendix I of my book.

KJV translators rendered into English. That is, he must do what I claim he does—let the KJV English determine the words of the Hebrew and Greek. But after he has done all this collating of texts, perhaps he should ask himself the question: Why have these texts not existed before now?

- (6) But before Khoo can produce pure texts that underlie the KJV, he must first produce a pure KJV. Current editions of the King James Bible differ from one another in hundreds of places.⁷ While most variations are minor and insignificant, a few variations do involve some degree of significance. But all variations fail Khoo's test of purity: every book, every chapter, every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter! Khoo does not have a King James Bible that meets that degree of purity to hold in his hand. He must produce one, but he has no standard by which to judge its purity.

One may accuse me of going to meticulous extremes in judging Khoo's position. That is true, I have gone to that extreme; but I have only gone to the extreme standard that Khoo set for himself. He defined his position. Let him match up to his own standard. So I conclude about Khoo what I previously concluded about Hills: Khoo's defense of the *Textus Receptus* is really a scholarly disguise for a King James Only agenda. He vigorously defends an in-hand English translation, not non-existing hypothetical Hebrew and Greek texts.

Khoo also accuses me of "singing an inclusive, pluralistic, and syncretistic tune by commending and recommending the use of ecumenical, liberal, neo-evangelical, and feminist versions of the Bible." It is significant that Khoo provided no quotation to substantiate his accusation. Although I evaluated several modern versions in chapter 14, the evaluations are merely descriptive; none are explicitly commended or recommended. Nowhere did I explicitly recommend not using the King James Version. After explaining that modern versions support the principle doctrines of orthodox Christianity (chapter 15), I recommended the "comparative use of conservative modern versions" (p. 394). Khoo's judgmental adjectives originated in his own overly critical imagination, not from anything I wrote. On the other hand, the King James Version is probably the most ecumenical of all English Bibles in its broad distribution of usage among denominations and sects for the support of their particular and varying doctrines, being used even by numerous cults. So the use of the KJV does not protect anyone from doctrinal error any more than the use of conservative modern versions leads to doctrinal perversion. Doctrinal error is conceived in the heart of unbelief, not in a translation of God's Word.

Khoo said, "Price wants Christians to be uncertain or agnostic about the precise location of God's Word," interpreting my words as though I said the location of God's word is unknown. Although I did state the factual truth that the autographic text of the Bible is not precisely contained in any existing (preserved) Hebrew or Greek manuscript (apograph) or printed edition, it is not as though I said its location is unknown; I stated: "God has preserved the texts of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New

⁷ See Chapter 6 and Appendix B of my book.

Testament by means of the consensus among thousands of ancient Hebrew Old Testaments and Greek New Testaments. The witness of these ancient Bibles is supplemented by the witness of several ancient translations of the Scripture, and by the witness of quotations found in the writings of ancient rabbis and Church Fathers” (p. 151). I did say that there is a measure of uncertainty in our ability to precisely recognize which reading is the preserved original one in some places where variation takes place, but that is a human limitation, not a failure of preservation. Khoo is bothered by such uncertainty, regardless of how small it may be, but he refuses to recognize that this uncertainty is no different than the uncertainty he has in recognizing which of the variant readings of the existing KJV Bibles are the “true” readings. Let him tell us where the word-for-word, syllable-for-syllable, letter-for-letter, 100% certain, validated “true” printed edition of the King James Bible is located. Let him tell us where the word-for-word, syllable-for-syllable, letter-for-letter, 100% certain, validated “true” printed edition of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament are located that perfectly underlies the “true” King James Bible. Then we can discuss his 100% certainty; but until then, his complaints about uncertainty are phony. He has blind eyes to the uncertainty inherent in his own assumed final authority.

Finally, Khoo is offended that I encourage God’s people to think. He objects to me using sound reasoning in harmony with Biblical faith. God’s Word does not discourage sound reasoning; God Himself instructed His people to think: “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD” (Isa. 1:18). Godly wisdom is not mindless; it involves knowledge, understanding, discernment, and sound thinking in harmony with faith in God and His Word. The apostle Paul regularly reasoned with the Jews in their synagogues about God’s promises of a coming Messiah and how the promises were fulfilled in history in the person of Jesus Christ. While Paul rejected worldly, human wisdom, he promoted godly wisdom, commanding his followers to “Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time” (Col. 4:5). The apostle James encouraged believers to ask God for wisdom (James 1:5). Faith and reason are not enemies, they work together. God promised to preserve His Word, but He did not say how it was to be preserved. Biblical thinking faith believes God’s promises and observes that he fulfilled the promise in history in the thousands of surviving (preserved) copies of Bibles. Khoo rejects all the witnesses God preserved as corrupt and unreliable; inventing instead a hypothetical text underlying a presumed authoritative translation, a text that never existed in history and that Khoo has never seen and held in his hand. I prefer to go with what God has actually done rather than to accept the figment of Khoo’s imagination.